



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

Fish and Wildlife Service

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INTERIOR OFFICIALS PLAN AFRICAN TRIP TO EVALUATE ELEPHANT CONSERVATION PROGRAMS

The Interior Department's Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks Constance Harriman, and wildlife experts from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), will travel to Africa August 7-19 to gain first-hand information on elephant conservation programs.

Last year, at the request of Interior Secretary Manuel Lujan, Harriman led the U.S. delegation to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). The convention adopted restrictions on commercial trade in ivory products.

The African countries of Zimbabwe and Botswana invited Harriman and other United States officials to observe how they have enhanced their elephant populations through management techniques and conservation measures. Elephants were significantly reduced throughout much of southern Africa in the early 1900's, but have apparently rebounded as a result of management practices. Harriman said, "We want to learn directly how these countries have succeeded in maintaining healthy elephant herds at a time when elephant populations in

(more)

other African countries are declining rapidly because of poaching and habitat loss."

While in Zimbabwe and Botswana, Harriman and FWS experts will observe anti-poaching measures, and elephant marking and tracking activities used to monitor the overall elephant population. She will also meet with governmental and tribal leaders to discuss elephant management and conservation topics, including the role of sport hunting. "Both countries are practicing elephant conservation strategies that may be useful in other countries trying to protect, rebuild, and maintain herds," Harriman said.

The trip complements Harriman's recent approval of elephant conservation programs to be funded in several African nations under provisions of the African Elephant Conservation Act. Harriman announced earlier this week that nearly \$700,000 in funding and matching grants from the World Wildlife Fund, Eastern European Commission, and involved countries will be used for elephant conservation efforts by Gabon, Tanzania, Burkina Faso, Zambia, and the Central African Republic.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: Assistant Secretary Harriman will be in Africa August 7-19. Those wishing to arrange for an interview with her during the trip or upon her return should contact the U.S. State Department Public Affairs Officers in the U.S. Embassies in Harare, Zimbabwe, or Gaborone, Botswana, or Bruce McElvein in the Office of the Assistant Secretary at (202) 208-4945.